

national independence by a single people had the coolness, forecast, and capacity to introduce into a merely revolutionary document an abstract truth, applicable to all men and at all times. And so, to embalm it there, that today and in all coming days it shall be a rebuke and a stumbling block to the very harbingers of a reappearing tyranny and oppression.

Happy birthday, Mr. Jefferson.

And now I am honored to sign a proclamation celebrating Thomas Jefferson's birth and his continuing influence on our great land.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:30 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Roxane Gilmore, wife of Gov. James S. Gilmore III of Virginia.

Proclamation 7426—Thomas Jefferson Day, 2001

April 12, 2001

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Our Nation's Founding Fathers overcame enormous obstacles to establish a system of government unequaled in history. We are the beneficiaries of their sacrifice, courage, and honor. But among these legendary patriots, Thomas Jefferson remains unique as the one who articulated the essential values and principles of American liberty and freedom. Today, we gather here to celebrate the birthday of Thomas Jefferson and to reflect on his enduring contributions to the United States and the world.

Few Americans have shaped our collective destiny as thoroughly and as originally as Thomas Jefferson. His achievements are breathtaking in their scope and diversity. Beyond his achievements in public life as Governor of Virginia, author of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom, Secretary of State, third President of the United States, and founder of the University of Virginia, Jefferson was a scholar, author, naturalist, inventor, bibliophile, and architect.

As President, Jefferson supported the Lewis and Clark expedition and concluded

the \$15 million purchase of the Louisiana Territory from France. He sold his personal library to the Library of Congress to replace its collection destroyed by the British in the War of 1812.

Thomas Jefferson's crowning achievement, however, was the Declaration of Independence. As its primary author, Jefferson drafted an immortal document that altered the way the world viewed the relationship between government and the governed. Jefferson's assertion of "inalienable rights" including "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" established the democratic standard by which our Nation would measure itself. Many other nations and peoples likewise strive to measure up to the standard set forth in the Declaration of Independence.

Thomas Jefferson's words are as thrilling and inspiring in 2001 as they must have been to his revolutionary allies in 1776. Our Nation has changed, our technology has progressed, but our basic love for liberty and freedom remains the same. As proud Americans, we must work together to maintain the vigor and strength of Jefferson's vision and to fulfill its promise of a better life for all our citizens. Doing this is our responsibility, and our gift, to the man who laid the foundation for what became the freest nation in the world.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim April 13, 2001, as Thomas Jefferson Day. I encourage all Americans to join in this celebration of Thomas Jefferson's achievements, and to learn more about his unique influence on our history, traditions, and values.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twelfth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand one, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fifth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., April 16, 2001]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on April 17.

Remarks on the Return of United States Navy Aircraft Crewmembers From China

April 12, 2001

Good afternoon. A short time ago I had the opportunity to speak to the 24 members of our United States flightcrew and welcome them home to America.

I told them they represent the best of American patriotism and service to their country. They did their duty with honor and with great professionalism. They are a reminder of the debt of gratitude all Americans owe to the men and women who wear our country's uniform and who voluntarily risk their lives in the service of freedom.

We are proud of our crew. And I am glad that they will be with their families this Easter weekend.

I know I speak for all Americans in saluting their courage and the extraordinary skill of the pilot, Navy Lieutenant Osborn, who guided the severely damaged aircraft to an emergency landing that saved 24 lives.

We're looking forward to talking with the flightcrew about exactly how the accident happened. From all the evidence we have seen, the United States aircraft was operating in international airspace in full accordance with all laws, procedures, and regulations and did nothing to cause the accident.

The United States and China have agreed that representatives of our Governments will meet on April 18th to discuss the accident. I will ask our United States representative to ask the tough questions about China's recent practice of challenging United States aircraft operating legally in international airspace.

Reconnaissance flights are a part of a comprehensive national security strategy that helps maintain peace and stability in our world. During the last 11 days, the United States and China have confronted strong emotions, deeply held and often conflicting convictions, and profoundly different points of view. China's decision to prevent the return of our crew for 11 days is inconsistent with the kind of relationship we have both said we wish to have.

As we move forward, the United States and China will no doubt again face difficult

issues and fundamental disagreements. We disagree on important basic issues such as human rights and religious freedom. At times, we have different views about the path to a more stable and secure Asian-Pacific region.

We have different values, yet common interests in the world. We agree on the importance of trade, and we want to increase prosperity for our citizens. We want the citizens of both our countries to enjoy the benefits of peace in the world, so we need to work together on global security problems, such as preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

I will always stand squarely for American interests and American values. And those will no doubt sometimes cause disagreements with China. Yet, I will approach our differences in a spirit of respect.

The kind of incident we have just been through does not advance a constructive relationship between our two countries. Both the United States and China must make a determined choice to have a productive relationship that will contribute to a more secure, more prosperous, and more peaceful world.

I know I speak for all Americans when I say, welcome home to our flightcrew. I want to thank the families for your patience and for your sacrifice, and I wish all my fellow Americans a rich and meaningful Easter and Passover.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:15 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Shane Osborn, USN.

Statement on Federal Regulations on Privacy of Medical Records

April 12, 2001

Today I directed Secretary Thompson to allow a Federal rule that will protect the privacy of medical information for millions of Americans to become effective. For the first time, patients will have full access to their medical records and more control over how their personal information will be used and disclosed. The rule also provides a clear avenue of recourse for those Americans whose medical privacy has been compromised.